

HICKORY HILL PLANTATION
Wilson vicinity
East Feliciana Parish
Louisiana

HABS LA-50
LA-50

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HICKORY HILL PLANTATION

HABS No. LA-50

- Date: Ca. 1810, measured February 13th to 16th, 1940.
- Location: Wilson P.O., East Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, eight miles north of Jackson, two miles west of Wilson.
- Owner: Mrs. Mabel Freeman Richardson, granddaughter of the original owner.
- Description: A residence in fairly good condition. Two-story, eight-room brick house, 32' x 45', two-story porch at north (entrance) front supported by four large, brick, two-story columns (stuccoed) two round and the corner ones square. One of the few remaining examples of Seaboard Colonial in the State.
- History: Built by David McCants who came from South Carolina. Original structure consisted of four rooms (two on each floor) to which four more were added behind these not many years afterward. "It is strikingly English, patterned after the manor houses the builder had known in the Old Country."¹ Notable is the fact that all materials in the structure were found or made on the premises, i.e., brick and wood.
- David McCants fought with General Jackson in the War of 1812. His four sons were valiant soldiers in the Confederate Army. Union troops searched the house. Two daughters, Mrs. Blanche McCants Freeman, and Miss Imogene McCants, lived in the house until their deaths, the former in 1939, age 93.
- In 1881 the kitchen-dining hall (brick floor) was demolished. The two wooden urns that topped the portico at the front corners were removed recently.
- References: In addition to Gueymard's article, refer also to article by C.W. Price, Jr., in *The Progress*, Hammond, Louisiana, May 19, 1939.
- Historian: F. Ray Leimkuehler, Architect in Charge, Central Unit, Historic American Buildings Survey. (Leimkuehler's typescript was transcribed in 2008. The typescript copy was not signed by Leimkuehler, nor was it approved by signature of the district officer.)

¹ Quotation from an article by Claire L. Gueymard in *Morning Advocate* of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, February 14, 1937.

Appendix: Koch Photographs/Photo Mount Cards

After the establishment of HABS in 1933, and its continuance under a tripartite agreement between the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress, the AIA nominated a member of their local chapters to lead the documentation effort in the thirty-nine districts under the HABS program umbrella. These district officers had already devoted years to recording examples of early American architecture, were active in local preservation initiatives, and typically had architectural practices dependent on a design and restoration business. Richard Koch of New Orleans, Louisiana, was one of these men.

Koch was an established restoration architect and was active in New Orleans's emerging preservation community. He was a member of the Vieux Carre Commission, an entity charged with design review of the nascent historic district beginning in 1925. His architectural firm, Armstrong and Koch, was responsible for the renovations at the River Road plantation, Oak Alley (HABS No. LA-71), and at Shadows-on-the-Teche (HABS No. LA-75) as well as the new construction of Le Petit Theater in New Orleans's French Quarter. The theater project was heralded as one of the first new buildings designed, sensitively, with an eye to the historic character of the neighborhood. He also collaborated with William Wiedorn and Enrique Alferez on the design for the city's botanical garden. Coinciding with his work for HABS, Koch guided the restoration of the Gauche-Gray House on Esplanade; afterwards, he worked on the rehabilitation of the mansion house at Evergreen Plantation (HABS No. LA-1236).

As the district officer for Louisiana, Koch took photographs of various sites and encouraged research into local land records. The primary source material discovered in the archives was subsequently folded into the HABS record. Some of his photographs were included in a 1938 *Pencil Points* presentation of HABS work in the state; the *Pencil Points* publication came out in time for the AIA's annual meeting in New Orleans.² Not all of Richard Koch's photographs made it into the formal HABS collection at the Library of Congress, however. The HABS office in Washington has file copies of several of Koch's photographs dating from around 1936 to about 1941. Each print is mounted on a card and identified, but the negatives (and original pictures) remain elusive. Scans were made of the surviving photo mount cards and, for each site catalogued by Koch, appended hereafter.

² For more on the HABS program, see Lisa Pfueller Davidson and Martin J. Perschler, "The Historic American Buildings Survey During the New Deal Era," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 1, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 49-73; Catherine C. Lavoie, "Architectural Plans and Visions: The Early HABS Program and Its Documentation of Vernacular Architecture," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 2 (2006/2007): 15-35; and Jessie Poesch and Barbara SoRelle Bacot, editors, *Louisiana Buildings, 1720-1940: The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997).

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Ph. Richard Koch

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